

SUICIDE PREVENTION NETWORK News Bulletin

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International Survivor of Suicide Day by Veronica Scarpelli



Every year, survivors of suicide loss gather in locations around the world to feel a sense of community, to promote healing, and to connect with others like them.

Survivors of suicide loss joined together at 300 locations

around the on November 17, 2012, for this year's International Survivors of Suicide Day. In the AFSP Los Angeles Greater Region Chapter, there were 6 locations that participated. San Luis Obispo Hospice, Consumer Family Center in Bakersfield, Thousand

Oaks Library, The Chicago Professional School of Psychology – Downtown LA, Intercommunity Hospital in Covina and UC Irvine Student Center.

Survivors of suicide loss often feel isolated, but world wide, 1 million people die by suicide every year. Countless family members and friends are left behind wondering, "Why did this happen?" "How will I get through this?"

Each location welcomes survivors of suicide loss, providing a safe and healing space where everyone can comfortably participate in a way that is meaningful to them. Others join to listen to a diverse panel of survivors that discuss their losses, how they have coped and much more.

Since AFSP's International Survivors of Suicide Day was launched in 1999, growth in the number of sites and attendance has increased greatly. This growth illustrates the immense need for survivors to connect with others who have experienced a similar loss.

People may also view the 90 minute film that is shown at all conference locations, online at www.afsp.org. This film is made specifically for survivors of suicide loss.

Next years conference will be again, the Saturday before Thanksgiving, on November 16, 2013 and you can go to The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's web site for more information.

Mental Health First Aid by Aileen Montoya

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an education program designed to help gatekeepers understand and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. The program is a 12 hour interactive course that presents an overview of mental illness and substance use disorders. Topics covered are depression, depression with suicidal intentions and nonsocial self-injury, anxiety, psychosis, substance use disorders and eating disorders. Participants learn a 5 step action plan similar to CPR called ALGEE (Assess for risk of suicide or harm, Listen nonjudgmentally, Give reassurance and information, Encourage appropriate

professional help and Encourage self-help and other support strategies). The course focuses on warning signs, risk factors, building an understanding of their impact and providing an overview of common treatments. Mental Health First Aid does not teach participants to diagnose or treat the person; similar to CPR it teaches people who have contact with the general public awareness so they can be the first line of response and is able to find resources for professional help.



Mental Health First Aid USA is managed, operated and disseminated by 3 national authorities, The National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and The Missouri Department of Mental Health and has received national recognition through the media on NPR morning edition "Mental

First Aid: How To Help In An Emotional Crisis", ABC News Now "Mental Health First Aid, Bryan Gibb on how to handle a mental health crisis"

and USA Today "Classes teach 'first aid' for mental health crises".

Mental Health First Aid is another useful tool for suicide prevention. It covers many issues that are interconnected with suicide such as depression, and substance use disorders. It provides gatekeepers with the tools necessary to recognize early warning signs and the knowledge to be able to provide early intervention for the person at risk of suicide.

We will be rolling out this training in 2013.

Suicide Prevention and Substance Abuse Treatment by Deborah Bielecki

Suicide is a tragedy for all involved – family, friends, neighbors, colleagues and communities. In the United States, suicide ranks as the 10th leading cause of death. It is also among the leading causes of death for people who abuse alcohol and drugs.

Compared to the general population, individuals with substance use disorders are at a substantially increased risk for suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.

Alcoholism (dependence and abuse) and illicit drug abuse are significant contributors to

lifetime risk for suicide, with about one in three individuals who die by suicide having a diagnosable substance use disorder (Schneider, 2009). The depressogenic effects of alcohol, increases risk among those who are already depressed. Chronic excessive drinking strains relationships, hence increasing risk consequent to loss of attachments. Additionally, alcohol impairs problem solving abilities and aggravates impulsive traits and suicidal tendencies. Many individuals who abuse alcohol and drugs may have other issues which in-

creases their risk for suicide; including co-occurring mental health problems such as depression, posttraumatic stress disorder and some personality disorders. There is also an increased risk due to substance-induced effects (e.g., symptoms in the context of drug use, intoxication, or withdrawal) such as substance-induced depression, anxiety, or psychosis.

With the significance of substance abuse as both a chronic risk factor for suicide, and increased or excessive substance use as an acute risk

factor, it is clear that prevention programs are vital and needed to address this tragic and lethal association. An increased understanding of the connection between substance abuse and suicide is imperative when developing and implementing effective preventative efforts.

For further understanding about the relationship between substance abuse and suicide, please see SAMHSA White Paper: Substance Abuse and Suicide Prevention: Evidence & Implications.

Media Coverage Post Summit by Rocio Ruiz

On Monday, September 10th, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) partnered with the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) to present the summit entitled *Two Lives a Day Lost in Los Angeles: Communicating about Suicide and Mental Health*. At the event news media and mental health stakeholders learned how to responsibly report about suicide and mental health through best practices, to encourage news stories that help separate myths from facts about mental health and provide effective resources for people seeking help. Below you will find the links to some of the media coverage:

Univision

<http://univision34.univision.com/videos/video/2012-09-11/panel-linea-suicidio-indice-latinos>

Koreatimes (Korean)

<http://www.koreatimes.com/article/750675>

<http://www.koreatimes.com/article/751636>

China Express (Chinese)

http://chinese.uschinapress.com/2012-09/11/content_1573588.htm

The following is an approximate timeline to submit information or articles for the upcoming issues.

March 2013	February 22
June 2013	May 24

What would you like to see in future issues of *SPN News*? Help us tailor *SPN News* to fit your needs. E-mail your suggestions or requests to roruiz@dmh.la county.gov and we'll see what we can do!

Partners in Suicide Prevention

You can find us on the statewide suicide prevention website

Know the Signs under County Resources

<http://www.suicideispreventable.org/>



Students throughout California are invited to **Direct Change** by submitting 60-second videos in two categories: suicide prevention and eliminating stigma about mental illness. The submission deadline is March 1, 2013. Visit the campaign website for contest rules and information:

www.directingchange.org